

LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Profile of Orland Blanchard: Botanist/Entomologist

In the basement of his modest home, he opened a cabinet and slid out a basswood box with a glass cover. Inside were immaculate rows of beetles - shiny caterpillar hunters that reminded me of rows of brand new cars on a dealer's lot. Each specimen was labelled with a tiny rectangular card suspended on a pin that pierced the elytra of the beetle. Along with the scientific name, Blanchard's name, in tiny print less than 1 millimeter high, appeared at the bottom of each card.

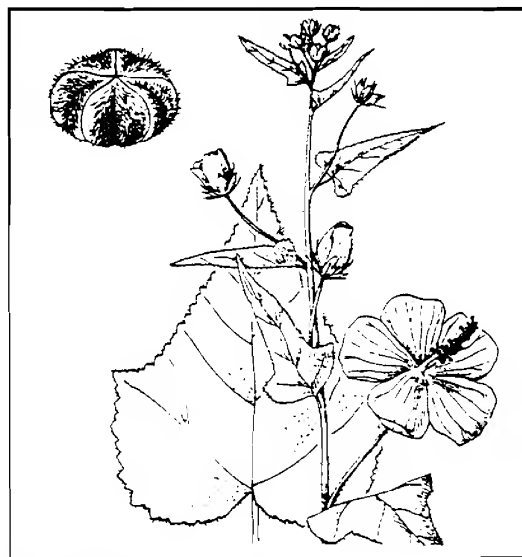
He has over 25 insect cases filled mostly with beetles. He estimates over 10,000 in the collection representing countless hours of careful, painstaking work. Collecting, relaxing, mounting, identifying, labelling, and maintaining the collection which he calls a "hobby".

During the course of our conversation, he mentioned a trip to a remnant woodland lot in Rockville Centre slated to become a parking lot. "I turned over a piece of wood and found horseshoe crab beetles." He showed me a specimen. It was not larger than the period at the end of this sentence. It was mounted on a triangular piece of paper because

even the thinnest mounting pin could not be put into the body of the insect. He put the beetle under a stereoscope. Sure enough, it had a typical horseshoe crab shape. "Its name is *Limulodes* - like *Limulus*, for the crab." he added.

Orland "Skip" Blanchard grew up in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. As a child he was surrounded by family members who were interested in natural history. His dad made him a butterfly net of cheese cloth, the first of many he would use. Blanchard caught on quickly. By sixth grade he found himself as a junior staff member at a Massachusetts Audubon wildlife sanctuary. Interest in insects and herpetology carried from high school to Clark University where he majored in biology. From there he entered Cornell University and earned a Ph.D. in botany. He also met his wife Jane while at Ithaca.

After teaching stints at Earlham College and



Seaside Mallow (*Kosteletzkya virginica* var. *aquilonia*, a relative of *K. blanchardii*);

a very rare plant in New York, collected once in Nassau County. This species has not been recently observed in New York and is considered to be extirpated.

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Purdue University, he is presently a professor of biology at C.W. Post on Long Island. Although teaching graduate and undergraduate courses are his bread and butter, he finds entomology "a nice form of recreation."

Two rooms of his home form the base of operations. Lying on one table in his basement lab, I found a report listing hundreds of moths he'd collected in the dwarf pine barrens in Westhampton. Since 1984 he's been assisting the Nature Conservancy and New York State Natural Heritage Program by making insect and plant surveys in various areas. He travels far and wide with his butterfly net and collecting jars. He also attends meetings and belongs to the Long Island Botanical Society, Torrey Botanical Club, New York Flora Association, Botanical Society of America, American Society of Plant Taxonomy, and International Association of Plant Taxonomists. Skip Blanchard is a busy man.

Taking the opportunity to praise Long Island's varied biological habitats he noted, "Belonging to the Long Island Botanical Society has helped open my eyes to the other side of Long Island. It has dozens of wonderful natural areas to explore."

As I looked at the tiger beetles I asked how many species occur on Long Island. "Fourteen," he quickly answered. I asked for the list. He immediately listed twelve of the fourteen species on paper in Latin, both genus and species name. I was impressed. He looked up the other two, then gave me a short natural history lesson about the plight of the tiger beetle on Long Island: "Their larvae live in vertical holes just below the surface of sandy trails. Unfortunately, dirt and mountain bikes cause problems. One beetle is on the federal list of endangered insects."

He has a delightful sense of humor. I've heard his puns on a few field trips. When he showed me Rich Cech's list of butterflies in the New York/Long Island area, he called it the Butterfly Cech List.

Blanchard is a serious botanist as well. The cotton or mallow plant family is one focus of his attention. While in Mexico he collected some seeds and plant material from an unidentified mallow. This discovery turned out to be a triple play. He sent the plant to a colleague in Texas. The plant turned

out to be new to science. It was named *Kosteletzkya blanchardi*. What is more amazing is that two tiny beetles were found inside the seeds. They too were new to science! Both beetles were named honoring Blanchard: *Acanthoscelides blanchardi* and *Acanthoscelides orlandi*.

Orland Blanchard is a dedicated scientist and teacher. Long Island is fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and interesting resource.

Thomas Allen Stock, Smithtown

In the field with Roy Latham, #3

Prologue. Historically, the Latham family of Orient maintained close ties with Gardiners Island. During the early 1800's Roy Latham's grandfather, Moses Austin Latham, transported horses to the island for the Gardiner family. Roy, as a young teenager, first went to Gardiners Island during the 1890's. Throughout his adult life Roy published many papers on the natural history of the island, including pioneering studies on Osprey nesting behavior. He frequently brought visiting scientists (several from Europe) to the island and also led field trips there for the Torrey Botanical Club.

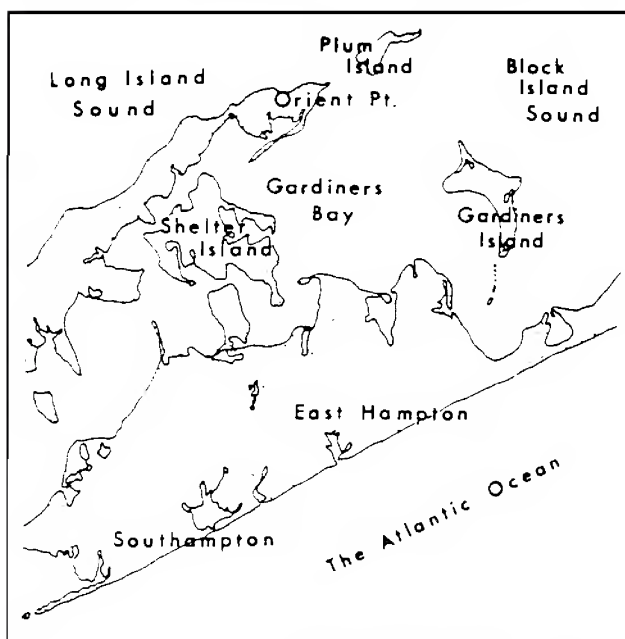
While recently looking through files at the Southold Indian Museum, I came across the following account of Roy's trip with two younger brothers to Gardiners Island. Although the account is not botanically oriented, it provides insight into the depths of Roy Latham's natural history experiences. I thank Professor Walter Smith, President of the Southold Indian Museum, for the opportunity to study Roy Latham's unpublished papers.

2 July 1916. "Today we had an adventure that will always be remembered as long as we live. Harry, Frank and I started out in my motor boat, May, for Gardiner's Island. Everything went well until we reached the old fort on Gardiner's Point,

where we stopped and looked it over. Saw about 50 nests of the Common Terns on the beach, and one Osprey nest on the old dock.

A southwest gale was working up as we discovered motor trouble caused by dirty gasoline. Leaving the fort at two p.m. we decided to abandon the trip to the Island owing to the gale, and instead headed west plunging through the great rollers. We were about to the middle of Gardiner's Bay when the engine stopped. Taking off the carburetor we saw that no gas was being pumped, although there was plenty in the tank. We could do nothing with it, and all being sick by the tossing of the boat we layed down on the cabin floor with the unearthly feeling of seasickness. I was the first to lose my lunch by going out to try and disconnect the gasoline pipe where the trouble seemed to be; but I had to give it up and lie down. Finally the other two were losing their dinners.

Night was now coming on and the waves were reaching mountainous heights. The boat was drifting very slowly eastward, the cable of the anchor not being long enough. We hauled the row boat on board and lashed her fast, lit a lamp and crawled into the cabin for the night. Later in the evening we found that she was drifting fast toward



Map of eastern Long Island,
from Hehre (1977) "The Flora of Gardiner's Island"

the north into deeper water. Near midnight we were at the south entrance to Plum Gut, with the wind a gale and the tide going like a race horse; we drifted more to the east and finally the anchor caught on more shallow water just off the Plum Island lighthouse. We blew the horn and rang the fog bell and waved the lantern for aide in the very bad position, but we got no call.

A heavy squall was coming up from the northwest. The tide turned just after midnight while we were bouncing about like a cork. The turn of the tide pulled us off into deeper water again and we were drifting rapidly toward the breakers on the Plum Island bar. The water seemed exceptionally deep so close to the shore. At every flash of lightning we could see the breakers rolling high on the bar; dangerous looking rocks appeared here and there above the water. We were not over two boat lengths from the shore and every moment expected to be stove in on a rock. I knew as soon as the boat hit the surf it was the last of her, and was prepared to abandon her at once. We unlashed the row boat and I slung the camera and collecting bag around my shoulder.

Just at that time the anchor caught with the stern almost on shore. There we hung as one of the worst thunder squalls I ever saw came up and passed directly overhead. The rain came down in torrents, it was the wildest of wild nights. That was about two a.m.

Later we drifted off and away, south again half way back to the old fort at Gardiner's Point. At day light we were in a light rain with a moderate sea running. Feeling better we cleaned out the gasoline pipe and got the engine under way and reached home about 8:30 a.m."

Eric Lamont, Riverhead

Wildflower Lament

Soon after the ice age, wildflowers colonized Long Island. They were there to line the footpaths of the first Long Islanders and remained to border the wagon roads of European arrivals, and flourished even as these roads were paved. Lately, 10,000 years after their arrival, the policy of reshouldering our roads with turf grass and untimely mowings has diminished their numbers and threatens several species' survival. **Jean Held, New York City**

Horsefly-Weed

The small, yellow, papilionaceous (having a pea-like flower) flowers are the size of horseflies. So are the rattle box seeds. So are the leaflets of clover-like leaves. This plant was used as a homeopathic remedy for typhoid fever. Its asparagus-like shoots are poisonous as is the mature plant. An 1818 book called *Medical Botany* mentions that it is "reputed to poison browsing cattle."

It likes dry soil and will even favor burnt over fields. Its bushy green luxuriance turns jet black as it slowly dries at the end of the season. It was an economical but unsuccessful substitute for indigo dye. Thus it is called false indigo, *Baptisia tinctoria*. *Baptisia* comes from the Greek, "*baptizein*" which means "*to dye*". It was an ingredient in colonial ink recipes. It is a member of the legume family which means it contains bacteria in the roots which fixes free nitrogen. Fixing means that it forms nitrogen compounds in its tissues.

There is at least one butterfly that seems to like it so much as to be named after it - the wild indigo dusky wing... *Eyrnnis baptisiae* Forbes. That both organisms share a common scientific name suggests the concept of coevolution.

Syrphidflies also love the pollen. Syrphidflies look a bit like horseflies. I doubt that real horseflies ever came close to this plant. *Baptisia* lives as far away as one can get from moist salt marshes where horseflies breed.

Other insects that live on *Baptisia* are the leafcutter bee of the genus *Megachile*. Bees of the genus *Helictus* are also closely associated with it.

Journal Entry, 22 March 1992: "Along a trail on the moraine in central Brookhaven, just east of the red, white, and blue pinnacle memorial to Long Island's Vietnam Veterans, I passed a three foot high bulbous shrub half green, half black. Its afro-style goes well with the landscape. It jiggles when I brush against it, the seed pods rattling a hello. The colonists made ink from its black juice. I like its position - an intermediary between the stony path and the pitch pine woodlands. It may have been false indigo to the colonists working with dyes, but to me, any plant that can be converted into ink is wonderful."

Thomas Allen Stock, Smithtown



Checklist of Wildflowers of the South Fork

The South Fork Natural History Society has just published a checklist of the South Fork's most showy and conspicuous wildflowers likely to be observed along edges of roadsides and borders of woodlands. The checklist is appropriate for use throughout all of Long Island. The following information is provided for each of the 150 species included in the checklist: scientific name, common name, family, native vs. introduced status, flowering period specific for the South Fork, and bloom color with uncommon color forms noted. A short statement on ethics is also provided.

To order your copy, please send \$1 (for each checklist) and a self addressed, stamped #10 size envelope to: South Fork Natural History Society, P.O. Box NATURE, Amagansett, N.Y., 11930 (attention, Carol Crasson).

Also available from SOFO are checklists of Birds, Seashells, and Reptiles & Amphibians of the South Fork. Please send an additional \$1 for each additional checklist, and add an extra stamp or two.



Nature Poetry

Cone Poems: A collection of 13 poems by Thomas Allen Stock, celebrating the Long Island Pine Barrens. Available free from the author: 11 Ingelore Court, Smithtown, N.Y. 11787.

Winged: A book of poems by George Held, including "The Sandplain Gerardia." 32 pages, staple bound, two-color cover (cover art by Jean Held). Send \$5 to George Held, 285 West 4th Street, New York, NY, 10014-2222.

Society News

January & February Meetings

Due to the snow blizzard that dumped 24 inches on Long Island, the January meeting was cancelled and rescheduled for 12 March 1996.

Tom Stock recently interviewed **Bob Laskowski** who told an interesting story concerning the Hempstead Plains: Bob recalls observing, during the 1930's, wagon tracks that broke the thick grassland sod of The Plains; in these narrow tracks non-native, weedy plants could be found, whereas the surrounding acres of tallgrass prairie consisted exclusively of thick, impenetrable sod dominated by native species.

Skip Blanchard was mucking about a red maple swamp near Riverhead in early February and observed skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) in full flower; spring can't be too far off.

Eric Lamont announced that **Dr. Henry Moeller** (Dowling College) and his student **Christopher Williams** have been conducting a floristic survey of Squires Pond in Hampton Bays. Several rarities have been reported but need to be confirmed.

Audrey Watson, a natural history illustrator from Mattituck, is documenting the flora with detailed illustrations. She has agreed to allow LIBS to print her botanical illustrations in future issues of the newsletter; her portfolio of the project was viewed by members at the February meeting and everyone marveled at the detail and high artistic quality. Previously, Audrey had been commissioned as a natural history illustrator on the Galapagos Islands.

Mindy Block will be teaching an adult education course on Ecological Restoration at Suffolk Community College/Eastern Campus. Students will learn of exotic species control and plant propagation techniques; they will also learn how to plan and implement a school restoration project. For more information please call 516/360-0800.

New Plant Society for New York

Press Release: Announcing a new organization in New York State for everyone interested in growing wildflowers and other native plants. Our first meeting to launch this new plant society will be held on Wednesday, 24 April 1996, at 3:30 p.m. at the

New York State Museum in Albany (the first day of the N.Y.S. Natural History Conference). Anyone involved in growing native plants, on whatever scale, is welcome to attend.

For more information, contact **Carol Southby** (716/383-8168), or write to **Andria Post**, P.O. Box 922, Bridgehampton, New York, 11932. Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope for a reply. Membership information will be mailed in the summer.

L.I. Nature Calendar A Call For Contributions

Thomas Allen Stock of Smithtown is assembling material for a calendar focusing on Long Island natural events throughout the year. The 11 x 17 format will include black and white photographs and notes from naturalists about weather, history, astronomy, birds, animal behavior, plants, people, conservation tips, gardening, fishing, etc. The calendar will be printed on recycled paper with soy based ink. Each date will have room to jot down personal observations.

Contributions can be sent to: Long Island Nature Calendar, c/o Thomas Allen Stock, 11 Ingelore Court, Smithtown, N.Y., 11787-9998. Note the date and location of natural events that are likely to happen again about the same time each year. If your observation is included, you will be given credit in the calendar, and a complimentary copy will be sent to you as an additional thank you. The 1997 calendar will appear in the fall of 1996. The deadline is 1 April 1996.

Cranberry Bog Guide

Suffolk County Parks Department has reprinted the 1973 interpretive guide to the Cranberry Bog Preserve and has dedicated it to the memory of **Joseph M. Beitel**. Cranberry Bog Preserve, located just south of Riverhead, has long been a mecca for students of rare and unusual plant and animal life. The 20 page illustrated booklet contains articles on the area's history, ecology, invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, and flora. Included also are checklists of plants and birds. **Free** copies are available from: Suffolk Co. Parks Dept., P.O. Box 144, West Sayville, N.Y., 11796, attention: Karen McMillan.

LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Founded: 1986; Incorporated: 1989.

The Long Island Botanical Society is dedicated to the promotion of field botany and a greater understanding of the plants that grow wild on Long Island, New York.

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Conservation	John Turner
	Louise Harrison
Education	Mary Laura Lamont
	Tom Stock
Hospitality	Nancy Smith
	Betty Lotowycz
Program	Skip Blanchard
	Steven Clemants
Editor	Eric Lamont

Membership

Membership is open to all, and we welcome new members. Annual dues are \$10. For membership, make your check payable to LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY and mail to: Lois Lindberg, Membership Chairperson, 45 Sandy Hill Road, Oyster Bay, NY 11771-3111

PROGRAMS

12 March 1996 - 7:30 pm*,

Member's Night: The Second Try.

Museum of L.I. Natural Sciences, room 137, SUNY at Stony Brook; Our January member's night meeting was snowed out so we are trying again. Contact **Steve Clemants** at 718-941-4044 x 234 if you plan to bring slides.

9 April 1996 - 7:30 pm*, Dr. Margery Oldfield

"Values of Biodiversity;" Muttontown Preserve Nature Center, East Norwich. Dr. Oldfield, Director of the Seatuck Research Program in Islip, will talk about intrinsic and instrumental values of biodiversity, using examples both from the local area and from elsewhere in the nation and the world.

*Refreshments & informal talk begins at 7:30pm, the meeting starts at 8pm. For directions to: 1) MOLINS, call 516/632-8230; 2) Muttontown Preserve call 516-571-8500.

LONG ISLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

c/o Muttontown Preserve
Muttontown Lane
East Norwich, New York 11732

